

REMARKS

Entry of the foregoing and reconsideration of the subject application are respectfully requested in light of the amendments above and the comments which follow.

As correctly noted in the Office Action Summary, claims 1-7 and 9-34 were pending. By the present response, claims 4 and 34 have been amended and claims 7, 32 and 33 canceled. Thus, upon entry of the present response, claims 1-6, 9-31 and 34 remain pending and await further consideration on the merits.

Support for the foregoing amendments can be found, for example, in at least the following locations in the original disclosure: the original claims and Figures.

Entry of the foregoing is appropriate pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.116 for at least the following reasons. First, the amendments address the new grounds of rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, thereby reducing the number of issues present upon appeal. Second, the amendments raise no new issues that would necessitate further search and/or substantive reexamination. Third, the amendments clearly overcome the grounds of rejection.

DRAWINGS

Replacement figures FIG. 3A and FIG. 3B are enclosed. The indication in the figures of the case hardened area is not intended to represent or limit in any way the thickness, depth or position of the case hardened material beyond that feature as already described in the claims. Any construing of the figures in such a manner is respectfully traversed.

No new matter has been added. Annotated sheets are also enclosed.

Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

Applicants note with appreciation that claims 1-3 and 9-31 are allowed and the indication that claim 7 contains allowable subject matter if rewritten in independent form, as noted in paragraph 6 of the Official Action. Claim 7 has been written in independent form as claim 4 and includes the subject matter of any intervening claims and is considered allowable. Claims 5-6 and 34 now depend from allowable claim 4. Thus, all pending claims, e.g., claims 1-6, 9-31 and 34 are allowable.

CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 4-6 and 32-34 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,249,868 to Watts (hereafter "*Watts*") in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,629,353 to Burke (hereafter "*Burke*") and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 5,879,743 to Revankar (hereafter "*Revankar*") on the grounds set forth in paragraph 5 of the Official Action. The rejection is moot in view of the above amendments. Allowable claim 7 has been written in independent form as claim 4 and includes the subject matter of any intervening claims. Claims 5, 6, and 34 now depends from allowable claim 4. Claims 32 and 33 have been canceled.

Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, further and favorable action in the form of a Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner feel that any issues remain, it is requested that the undersigned be contacted so that any such issues may be adequately addressed and prosecution of the instant application expedited.

Respectfully submitted,

BURNS, DOANE, SWECKER & MATHIS, L.L.P.

Date: March 3, 2005

By: 

Jeffrey G. Kilian

Registration No. 50,891

P.O. Box 1404
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1404
(703) 836-6620

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS:

Please replace FIG. 3A and FIG. 3B with the enclosed replacement figures, in which the least portion of the outer surface that has been carburized is indicated by a dashed line and cross-hatching and reference numeral 340 in FIG. 3A and the carburized material is indicated by a dashed line and cross-hatching and reference numeral 342 in FIG. 3B in agreement with paragraphs [0024] and [0025] of the specification. No new matter has been added. Annotated sheets are also enclosed.

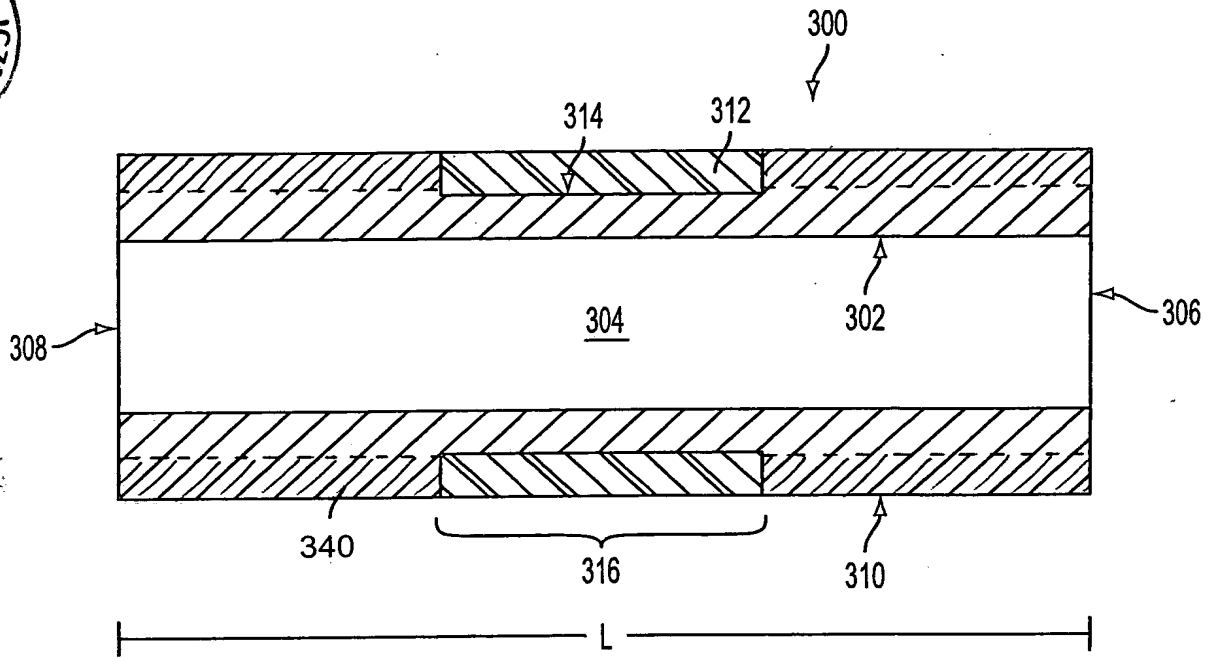
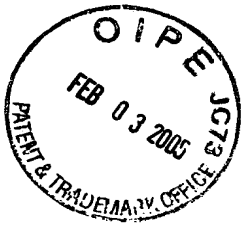


FIG. 3A

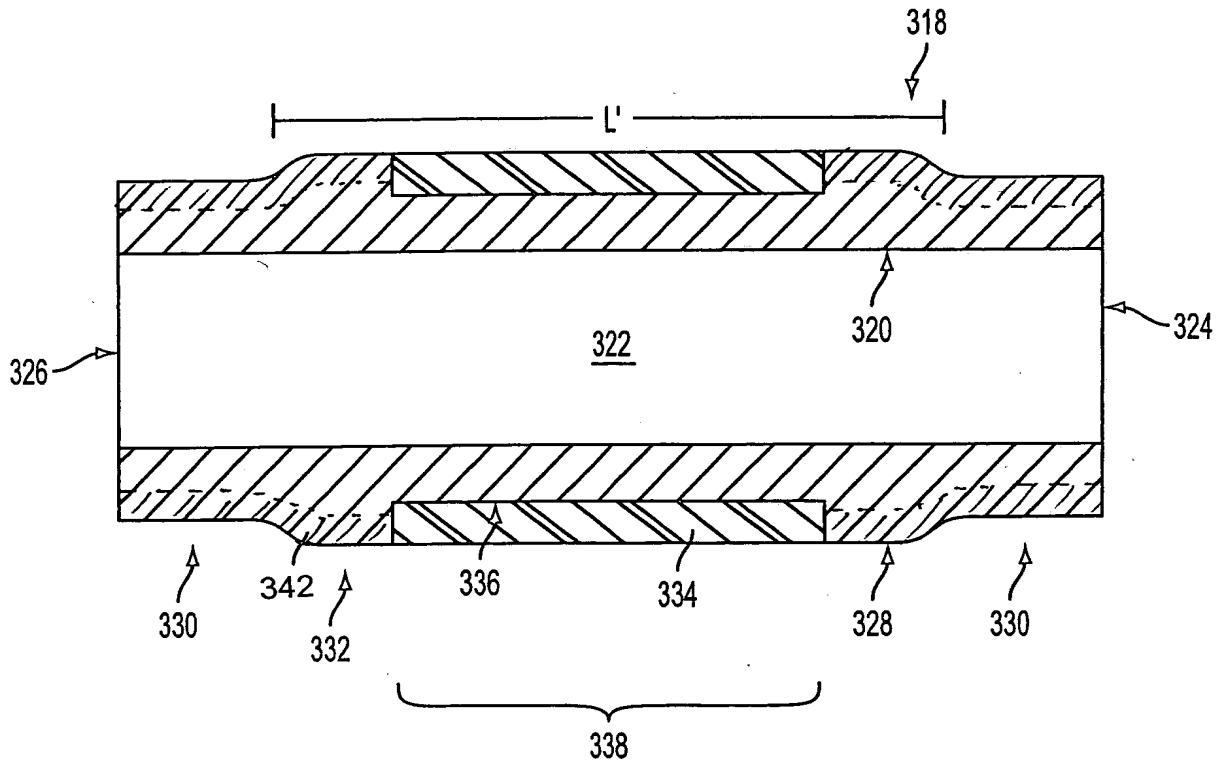


FIG. 3B